

## WISHBONE ASH: 'Just Testing' (MCA MCF 3052)

TEN YEARS since those twin guitars first erupted into action on stage and celebrating their first decade, Wishbone have come up with this little commemorative package. What's more, they've found themselves a decent bit of cover art again.

'Just Testing' is about the most relaxed Ash album I've encountered. On a casual listen you think it's too underplayed, but the songs are some of their most subtle. The opening track 'Living Proof' is hot on dynamics. Guitars tapping like in tune typewriters before the ever moody vocals of Martin Turner jumping off the bass fretboard. But my favourite track of side one is 'Haunting Me,' Turner's bass acting as the king pin through a smoke haze of duelling guitars and Upton as solid as ever, bringing up the rear. Live, it should be explosive.

'Insomnia' leads into the simplistic bounding boogie of 'Helpless' with more siamese twin guitar work and one of those longwinded Ash endings, heavy on nostalgia. Side two gets off to a pretty inauspicious start with 'Pat The Price'. The guitar intro sounds like a thinly disguised version of 'Smoke On The Water' and it must have been a pretty uninspired day when they came to record this.

Ah ha, thought it was coming, the token Ash ponderous track 'New Rising Star.' Turner on one of his fine Springsteen imitations followed by a poker hot solo. 'Master Of Disguise' is blue grass country bumpkin topped by creamy guitar, vaguely similar to some of the efforts on 'Wishbone Four.' For the home run there's 'Life Line' which is heavily instrumental and almost a

second 'FUBB' but with more light than shade. Happy birthday ++++  
ROBIN SMITH